

By Bill Lambrecht, St. Louis Post-Dispatch
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WASHINGTON - Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-St. Louis, gained stature in Congress this afternoon when he was named to head a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee that can provide oversight on the nation's escalated war effort in Afghanistan.

At a hearing this afternoon, it was announced that Carnahan will take over for Rep. Bill Delahunt, D-Mass., as head of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight. Delahunt will head the Europe subcommittee, replacing Rep. Robert Wexler, D-Fla., who is leaving the Congress to head the Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation.

Carnahan's panel has a broad portfolio: Recent hearings have taken up topics as varied as global violence against women and paramilitary threats in Northern Ireland.

Carnahan said that his subcommittee will focus partly on overseeing U.S. operations in Afghanistan, recalling the Truman Commission's work in the 1940s examining World War II expenditures.

"The president laid out a very comprehensive plan but it's important to really follow how the money is being spent and what's working and what's not," Carnahan said a short time ago after ducking out of the full committee's hearing examining the new war strategy.

Carnahan said he's also considering examining why fewer tourists are coming to the United States and looking into efforts to track down missing persons as a result of conflicts in Bosnia, Iraq and Sudan.

"We have a large constituency of Bosnians in St. Louis and the reason for them being there is that they found themselves in the midst of a genocide," he said.

Carnahan, 51, was elected to Congress in 2004.

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